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STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
Department of Genetics

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Dear Salva-

I think you might be interested to know that ACDA (the Arms Control Agency) has asked me to go to Geneva as a consultant-commentator to the Disarmament Conference on questions of biological warfare. They may well have focussed on me for such a task, in part, because I have long adopted a position that distinguished between BW and CW on several grounds, 1) the gravity of the potential hazard of further escalation, subversion of molecular biology and virology research, and threats to the whole world population from the escape of infectious organisms from testing areas or theatres of military use, and 2) the problem of defining a CW agents, stockpiles, and closed (commercial-proprietary) work on toxic agents. For example, is a tank car of chlorine or phosgene a CW stockpile?

At any rate, the US position on these matters is very close to my own, in terms of the priority with which various steps should be taken. I perhaps differ with regard to the level of verification that may be necessary before a universal disavowal of CW could be agreed upon; but there are still serious technical problems in defining just what each country has agreed not to ~~do~~ do in consequence of a broad treaty agreement; and unlike BW, the CW area is one of existing military interest in many countries.

Heden and others had mentioned to me, some time ago, the plans for some discussion about these problems at the International Microbiology Congress in Mexico next month; but I am quite unable to fit this into my schedule. I did know that you would be there, and of course that you have had a passionate interest in this subject, and I thought it might be useful ~~to~~ to pass on to you some of the detail on the U.S. and other positions that I have learned as pre-briefing for my appearance at Geneva (and which material is, of course, in the public domain.) I will be on that trip from August 2-9, but will be glad to hear from you otherwise if you want to quiz me about anything.

My own position on the matter is colored by the very grave fears that I have about virological warfare, and I feel it would be a great mistake to impede controls in that area by also mixing in other political and technical questions that inevitably attach to the CW issues. We ~~xx~~ should of course also deal with these as expeditiously as possible, but I see no possibility of a comparably agreement on them; and the good experience of convergence on BW, once achieved, might be a very great help.

Sincerely,

ENC: ACDA brief; my columns.